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Name at Structural Steel New, But Business Is Old

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Although the name and management are new, the business isn't. Green Bay Structural Steel, Inc., 865 Highland Ave., dates back to 1922 when Otto Kraft founded Northeastern Boiler and Welding Co., Ltd.

The name was changed after a group of local businessmen who took over in 1955, appointed new management in 1960. Northeastern ran into financial trouble, declared bankruptcy and was sold to the group.

Heading the organization now is James B. Christiensen who is president and chairman of the board of directors. Other officials are: Ted Chambon, executive vice-president; John Madden, secretary; George Kress, treasurer; E. D. Kranzush, assistant secretary, and Gerald Ravet, assistant treasurer.

Local Men Directors

The board of directors includes Christiensen, Chambon, Kress, Madden, Kranzush, Henry Beemster, Dan Betten, and Robert Cowles Jr.

Chambon, a veteran of 40 years in the structural steel field, was general manager of Kropp Steel, Rockford, Ill., prior to assuming duties here.

Otto Kraft founded the firm to make and repair such items of steel as tanks, fire escapes, boilers and construction girders. In the later years of his management he took into the business his two sons, Arnold and LaVerne.

When the business was sold to the local group (about 25 men) in 1955, the two sons stayed on to run the operation. In 1959 Herb Holtz was made president and general manager. Christiensen took over in July of 1961.

ployment slumped to a low of 18 in 1959. Under the new management, employment has climbed to about 90 currently.

Sales reflected this situation also. The 1960-61 fiscal year volume was $600,000. This fiscal year should produce sales of close to $2.3 million, according to Christiensen.

Otto Kraft was born in Green Bay in 1889. He was the son of Frank and Caroline (Cominsky), both of whom were born in Germany.

After completing school, Kraft embarked on a career in the boilermaking trade. In 1922, he and C. C. Betcher and Arnold Sasman formed Northeastern Boiler.

Business Change in '43

In 1943, Kraft bought out Betcher and Sasman and took his sons into the business as partners. Arnold became assistant general manager and LaVerne plant superintendent. At this time the plant was located at 119-121 Bridge St. The company made boilers, smoke stacks, tanks, erected structural iron and metal, did all kinds of welding, cutting and fabrication of steel and stainless steel.

During WW II, Northeastern built steel barges, and aftends for twin screw convoy vessels for the Navy. Ninety-eight per cent of the work at this time was for the government.

Today, Green Bay Structural Steel continues in the same field. The firm produces steel and stainless steel tanks "for anything from water to chemicals," says Christensen, fire escapes, conveyors and food machinery. Each item is custom made to the customer's specifications.

Lady of Charity home, Highway 57 interchange south of DePere, Beacon Shopping Center, Shopko, La Follette High School in Madison, Hamilton Mfg. Co. in Two Rivers, and a Bomarc missile site at Raco, Mich.

In addition, the company has fabricated steel for two bridges near the Soo, one 375 tons, another, 175 tons. They are presently engaged in bridge work for the East-West Expressway in Milwaukee.

The raw material used by the erection dept., of course, is steel. Some of the beams used in bridges weigh up to 18 tons and are 110 feet long, as the one sent to the Soo.

The machinery dept. where the tanks are constructed contains a complete machine shop which produces all the finished component parts for the manufactured equipment.

In addition, this department repairs industrial equipment for other local companies.

The primary raw material for the erection dept. is steel beams in "I" shapes, channel beams (half of an "I" beam, in "U" form) and angles. These are drilled, punched, welded and bolted, according to the specifications of the building under construction.

Green Bay Structural Steel is situated on 82 acres of land at Highland and Ashland Avenues on the city's Southwest Side. The facilities contain over 225,000 square feet, including a steel runway with an overhead crane for unloading beams.